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THE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARD MEXICO[1]

By Willard Saulsbury,
United States Senator from Delaware.

When Dr. Rowe, the president of this Academy, honored me with an invitation to preside at this session, he was kind enough to say that an acceptance involved no obligation to make an address or to take part in the discussion of the subjects to be dealt with at this meeting. I can assure you that a statement of that kind, coming with such an invitation, adds greatly to one's pleasure in accepting, and realizing that the gentlemen who will speak to you all know so very much more of the Mexican situation, its problems and obligations, than I do, I gladly content myself with the briefest reference to what we all know officially and for publication on that grave subject.

Every patriotic American recognizes that when we come into the field of foreign politics and our interests become involved in the affairs of other nations of the earth, questions of politics in the narrower sense are forgotten, that we cease to be democrats and republicans and are simply Americans. Partisanship in this country, we all feel, does stop and should stop at the seashore.

In the case of the unfortunate and distracted country to the south of us, our political differences stop at the Rio Grande. It may not be improper for me to refer briefly to our official attitude toward Mexico and to the proclamations of President Taft and President Wilson defining the duties of our own citizens toward that unhappy republic. We know in a general way how the long rule of President Diaz ended and how Madero succeeded to the presidency, but it may be well for me to call your attention to the fact that during the term of President Taft and while Madero was in power in Mexico, Congress, learning that other revolutions were preparing in that country, and that the shipment of arms and munitions of war promoted domestic violence there, passed a joint resolution authorizing the President, finding such conditions to exist, to proclaim it unlawful to export arms from the United States to that country. On the same day the resolution was

[1]Remarks as presiding officer of the session of the Academy, Friday evening, April 3, 1914.

passed by Congress, President Taft, declaring that conditions of domestic violence were being promoted by the use of arms or munitions of war sent from the United States, admonished all our citizens to abstain from violating the provisions of that resolution.

The death of Madero followed, then came the message of President Wilson, strongly adverse to General Huerta, and subsequently, the disorders continuing with no prospect of an early settlement, other nations being engaged in furnishing both sides to the quarrel with means of warfare, the President on the 4th day of February last, finding that there had been an essential change in the conditions under which President Taft's proclamation had been issued, revoked the same and placed the United States in the same position as other powers with reference to the exportation of arms and munitions of war to Mexico.

That is the position in which we stand today, and the President in revoking this prior proclamation, declared that there was at the time no constitutional government in Mexico and that the existence of the prior order under the changed conditions hindered and delayed "the very thing the government of the United States is now insisting upon, namely, that Mexico shall be left free to settle her own affairs and as soon as possible put them upon a constitutional footing by her own force and counsel."

Thus it will be seen our government has assumed its present position with the expressed desire and hope that our neighbors, embroiled in civil war, may by their own force and counsel and without interference, certainly without intervention, unless our own interest shall be endangered, or our great national policy threatened by an unfriendly act, settle as best they may their internal affairs, preventing our people, so far as possible, from entangling this government therein by advising them to remove themselves from the scene of conflict.

I believe that the action of both administrations, that of President Taft and of President Wilson, in restraining our citizens from taking part in the Mexican conflict and preventing the lives of our own people from being endangered, certainly in refraining from any active intervention in that country, meets the approval of all our people. The horrors, the sufferings, the losses of war are too great to be incurred by any people, if avoidable with honor, and this great American nation can well set an example to all the world of refraining to the last possible moment from engaging in wars, invasions and bloody controversy.